

CHAPTER V

PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

421 • ALL Veddas have a keen sense of ownership, and this is equally developed with regard to the hunting land of the group and the possessions of the individual. It was clear that of old the boundaries of the former were accurately known to all the men of the group and were seldom disregarded except in pursuit of a wounded animal, a contingency especially provided for by the Vedda game laws, and many writers have borne testimony to the unwillingness of Veddas to trespass on the territory of another group.

423 609 This was noted by Knox, whose remarks on this subject have already been quoted on p. 7. The next mention of this important feature in the organization of the Veddas is made by the Dutch Governor of Ceylon, Ryklof van Goens (1664—1675), the following account being taken from the Drs Sarasin: "The jungle is so divided among the Veddas that every one can easily recognise his boundary...they leave, however, comfortable roads through the interior of their country, for their own purposes as well as for strangers who are obliged to travel from the hills to the plains and vice versa. Don Juan de Costa has told us of such a journey made in the service of Rajah Singha. It was 45 years ago (consequently in 1630) that he descended from the mountains to these Veddah districts. There he was stopped by an archer who was accompanied by others who, armed in a similar manner, stood under the trees. The first enquired his business, whither he intended travelling and what was his mission, whereupon he explained his purpose. He had then to wait there between one and two hours until